

3/27/2015

The Formula Behind The Facebook "Like" Number

Number of URL Comments (if using Facebook comments)

Where this occurs:

On a URL that is using the Facebook comments plugin



How the Like data is influenced:

A user is reading an article on a specific website that has the Facebook comments plugin installed. When the comment is made on the page, the like data increases.

So, yes, the Facebook Like button absolutely pulls in much more data than just those simply clicking a button on the page. With the recent [overall reach decreases](#) the value of Facebook engagement couldn't be higher. An engaged user (whether they are in favor of a topic or not) is added to the overall "Like data" of a link, so make sure to get [folks talking about you](#) if trying to boost those Like numbers.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Greg Finn



Greg Finn is the Director of Marketing for Cypress North, a company that provides world-class social media and search marketing services and web & application development. He has been in the Internet marketing industry for 10+ years and specializes in Digital Marketing. You can also find Greg on Twitter (@gregfinn) or LinkedIn.

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4 Comments Marketing Land

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AJ Kohn 2 years ago
 I'm really happy to see this covered in greater depth since most don't understand the type of Like inflation that's going on.
 I did a small test about two years ago to show how this worked: <http://www.blindfiveyearold.co...>
 And if you're really interested in the breakdown you can use the Current Page bookmarklet I created as I was testing all this stuff out: <http://www.blindfiveyearold.co...>
 What's disconcerting is that people still want to compare Likes to Tweets or +1s on an equal level and that's just patently not true in the slightest. To me this is really walking the edge of social proof manipulation.

^ | v Share →

jsncruz 2 years ago
 The question for a lot of brands and companies still remain though: Are Facebook Likes enough of an engagement metric for them to believe in and therefore act upon, or is there more to it?

^ | v Share →

donthe 2 years ago
 Considering how thorough Facebook is about counting their "Likes", it's amazing to me how Facebook has never addressed the problem of transferring the "Like count" when moving a webpage from an old URL to a new URL. Even with a 301 permanent redirect Like Counts will not transfer, same problem with using short URL's

^ | v Share →

Muzamnil 2 years ago
 But I need to know how this data influences the SEO ranking of a page or website. Please can you explain.

1 ^ | v Share →

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BUSINESS INSIDER

The Truth About The Latest Facebook Privacy Scare Everyone Is Talking About



NICHOLAS CARLSON
OCT. 4, 2012, 3:44 PM

When a **Facebook** user sends a link to a Web page via a private Facebook message, that Web page will get an extra "Like," if it is a Facebook-"Like"-able Web page.

The *Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, and *Gizmodo* are portraying this as a privacy invasion for Facebook users.

It is not.

There is a simple reason why.

That "Like" is only added to the page's counter. There is no way to tell who added the like, however.

If you do not reveal something said or shared in private to others, you are not invading their privacy.

Here is a demonstration.

I sent this private message to my coworker, Alyson Shontell:



In it, I share a link to the [Grantland.com](http://www.facebook.com/Grantland) Facebook page. This message gave Grantland another "like."

However, Grantland was not added to my list of "likes" – viewable to friends.

See for yourself:

 Pine Mountain Lake
Horses · Airport
Restaurant
August 9th, 11:46pm
260 people like this
Emily Long likes this

 The Open
Championship
Company
July 16th, 8:51am
42,543 people like this

 Singularity & Co.
Book Store
July 11th, 9:02am
787 people like this
Noah Robischon and Kaila Hale-Stern like this

 Civilization Revolution
Games/Toys
June 5th, 1:32pm
17,210 people like this

 Infinity Blade II
Games/Toys
June 5th, 1:31pm
6,404 people like this

 Game of Thrones
TV Show
June 5th, 1:31pm
4,180,991 people like this
Matthew W. Caldecutt and 13 other friends like this

 Freedom
Book
June 5th, 1:31pm
39,708 people like this
Benjamin Pollara likes this

 Dubliners
Book
June 5th, 1:31pm
25,173 people like this
Craig Carlson likes this

 Weezer
Musician/Band
June 5th, 1:30pm
2,812,318 people like this
James Del and 9 other friends like this

 Radiohead
Musician/Band
June 5th, 1:30pm
9,031,437 people like this
Patrick Thomas and 30 other friends like this

 Beast
Public Figure
May 16th, 12:41pm
1,018,765 people like this
Nick O'Neill and 8 other friends like this

 Hotel 1898
Hotel · Spa · Bar
March 19th, 10:46am
3,289 people like this

 Airtime
Computers/Internet
February 24th, 3:06pm
18,326 people like this
Galit Adler and 6 other friends like this

 Van Cortlandt Park
Golf Course

There is no reason for anyone to be upset about Facebook doing this. For one, email providers like Gmail scan user emails all the time. Gmail does it to show relevant ads, fight spam, and slow down viruses.

For another, services across the Internet use whatever method they can to keep track of the popularity of Webpages. Google has a list of trends. The New York Times keeps track of most emailed stories:

MOST E-MAILED	RECOMMENDED FOR YOU
1. CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK Wright Masterwork Is Seen in a New Light: A Fight for Its Life	
2. MARK BITTMAN That Flawed Stanford Study	
3. PREOCCUPATIONS Follow a Career Passion? Let It Follow You	
4. The Woman Who Took the Fall for JPMorgan Chase	
5. Meningitis Cases Are Linked to Steroid Injections in Spine	
6. Hollywood Ending, With Meatballs	
7. Bizarre Species of Miniature Dinosaur Identified	
8. NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF Why Let the Rich Hoard All the Toys?	
9. EDITORIAL An Unhelpful Debate	
10. THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN China Needs Its Own Dream	

The truth is, there is nothing to see here. Move along.

UPDATE: Facebook got back to us with the following statement, which confirms my theory:

"Absolutely no private information has been exposed. Each time a person shares a URL to Facebook, including through messages, the number of shares displayed on the social plugin for that website increases. Our systems parse the URL being shared in order to render the appropriate preview, and to also ensure that the message is not spam. These counts do not affect the privacy settings of content, and URLs shared through private messages are not attributed publicly with user profiles.

We did recently find a bug with our social plugins where at times the count for the [Share](#) or [Like](#) goes up by two, and we are working on fix to solve the issue now. To be clear, this only affects social plugins off of Facebook and is not related to Facebook Page likes. This bug does not impact the user experience with messages or what appears on their timelines."

From our developer documentation
at: <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like/>

What makes up the number shown on my Like button?

The number shown is the sum of:

- The number of likes of this URL
- The number of shares of this URL (this includes copy/pasting a link back to Facebook)
- The number of likes and comments on stories on Facebook about this URL
- The number of inbox messages containing this URL as an attachment.

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EXHIBIT H

BUSINESS INSIDER

This Flaw In Facebook Lets You Create As Many Fake Likes As You Want



JIM EDWARDS

OCT. 5, 2012, 9:54 AM

Yesterday we told you that Facebook quietly scans your messages, searching for URLs that you've sent to your friends. When it sees one, it increases the number of Facebook Likes on that URL.

The business media — Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and Gizmodo — have portrayed this as a privacy invasion.

But perhaps more importantly, it appears to be a massive source of bogus Likes. Put simply, by using your own Facebook messages you can drive up the apparent number of likes any non-Facebook page gets, even if the messages you send don't indicate that you actually like the page.

This is important for two reasons:

- Facebook has been repeatedly sued by advertisers claiming their pages have seen too much click fraud. (There's a proposed class action case pending in a California federal appeals court, for instance). While click fraud is NOT the same thing as fake likes, plaintiffs' lawyers are clearly interested in any information that might indicate that Facebook generates the appearance of something being clicked on



Illustration: Ellis Hamburger

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg

FB	Mar 27 11:53AM	Change	% Change
		+0.34	+0.41%

when in fact it has not.

- Facebook recently [purged hundreds of thousands of fake fans and likes](#) from its system; an admission that the social network is riddled with bogus accounts.

Naturally, we tried to generate some fake clicks for ourselves, just to see how it works.

Here's our guide on how to do that.

First, we selected a [Business Insider](#) page that wasn't getting much traffic, so that we could see our own visits to the page in isolation from BI's general traffic. The page we chose was this [Q&A with Edelman CEO Richard Edelman](#).

Then I took a snapshot of the page BEFORE I manipulated it through Facebook.

Note that in the social sharing buttons at the top of the story, the page had been viewed 225 times and "recommended" on Facebook just five times:

60 Years In 60 Seconds: Q&A With Edelman CEO Richard Edelman

Jim Edwards | Oct. 1, 2012, 8:30 PM | 225

 5
  4
  27
  0
 


Edelman, a large independent PR agency, celebrated its 60th anniversary this year, and CEO Richard Edelman — whose father founded the agency — agreed to answer a few questions about the — it's been waited for a long



Then I sent a colleague, Christina Austin, a Facebook message that clearly indicated I had negative feelings about this story:



(For the record: **I obviously DO NOT think that Richard Edelman sucks!** This is just an experiment. Many companies monitor words like "sucks" next to their brand names in order to gauge negative consumer sentiment. Use of the word "sucks" is one of the easiest ways to alter any algorithm that is attempting to detect user sentiment.)

After Christina looked at the message, I refreshed my view of the Edelman page and – lo and behold! – the view counter had gone up by one, to 226, as expected, but the Facebook share button had increased by two, to seven recommendations:

60 Years In 60 Seconds: Q&A With Edelman CEO Richard Edelman

Jim Edwards | Oct. 1, 2012, 8:30 PM | 226 |

Edelman, a large independent PR agency, celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, and CEO Richard Edelman — whose father founded the agency — agreed to answer a few questions about the



To someone who knows nothing about Facebook's messaging system — which is to say, virtually everyone — it appears as if a single page visit triggered two Facebook likes on the page.

A Facebook spokesperson tells us:

This counter reflects the number of times people have clicked those buttons and also the number of times people have shared that page's link on Facebook.

We did recently find a bug with our social plugins where at times the count for the [Share](#) or [Like](#) goes up by two, and we are working on a fix to solve the issue now. To be clear, this only affects social plugins off of Facebook and is not related to Facebook Page likes.

In sum, Facebook is dishing out recommendations and likes all over the web, to the millions of pages that are now sown with Facebook sharing buttons, when nobody has actually clicked or recommended those pages.

Worse, those likes may actually reflect negative consumer sentiment.

And even though Facebook is going to fix the double-like bug, it's not going to alter its message-liking system.

Related:

- [These 20 Brands Lost The Most Facebook Likes The Day Of The Fake Fan Purge](#)

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December 20, 2012

Update to Messaging and a Test

Over the past several years, we've been working to improve Facebook Messenger on mobile and Facebook Messages on the web:

One ongoing conversation

Now all your messages, emails, chat and text messages are combined together in one ongoing conversation, whether they're sent from mobile or desktop.

The Other folder

In ~~2011~~ 2010 we introduced the Other folder, where less relevant messages go.

Messenger for Android

This month, we introduced a way to sign up for Messenger with just your name and phone number.

New filters for managing your Inbox

We've heard that messages people care about may not always be delivered or may go unseen in the Other folder.

As we announced last month, we're replacing the "Who can send me Facebook Messages" setting with up-front filters that help to address this feedback.

Contact Us

press@fb.com

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There are two options for new Inbox filtering:

Basic Filtering

If you select Basic Filtering, you'll see mostly messages from friends and people you may know (for example, friends of friends) in your Inbox. People who had the previous setting set to "friends of friends" or "everyone" will have Basic Filtering on.

Strict Filtering

If you select Strict Filtering, you'll see mostly messages from friends in your Inbox. People who had the previous setting set to "friends" will have "Strict Filtering" on.



With filters, the following types of messages may reach your Inbox that before would not:

- Someone using Messenger for Android, who is not on Facebook but has your contact info in their phone, wanted to send you a message

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July 21, 2014

Save what you discover on Facebook to explore later.

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- A friend of a friend wanted to include you in a message about a party along with some of your mutual friends
- A friend wanted to send a message to your @facebook.com address

If you see a message from someone you don't want to hear from in your Inbox, you can always select "Move to Other" or "Report Spam" from the Actions menu. You can also block people that you don't want to hear from on Facebook.

Inbox delivery test

Facebook Messages is designed to get the most relevant messages into your Inbox and put less relevant messages into your Other folder. We rely on signals about the message to achieve this goal.

Some of these signals are social – we use social signals such as friend connections to determine whether a message is likely to be one you want to see in your Inbox.

Some of these signals are algorithmic – we use algorithms to identify spam and use broader signals from the social graph, such as friend of friend connections or people you may know, to help determine relevance.

Today we're starting a small experiment to test the usefulness of economic signals to determine relevance. This test will give a small number of people the option to pay to have a message routed to the Inbox rather than the Other folder of a recipient that they are not connected with.

Several commentators and researchers have noted that imposing a financial cost on the sender may be the most effective way to discourage unwanted messages and facilitate delivery of messages that are relevant and useful.

This test is designed to address situations where neither social nor algorithmic signals are sufficient. For example, if

you want to send a message to someone you heard speak at an event but are not friends with, or if you want to message someone about a job opportunity, you can use this feature to reach their Inbox. For the receiver, this test allows them to hear from people who have an important message to send them.

This message routing feature is only for personal messages between individuals in the U.S. In this test, the number of messages a person can have routed from their Other folder to their Inbox will be limited to a maximum of one per week.

We'll continue to iterate and evolve Facebook Messages over the coming months.

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Facebook tweaks Messages with inbox filters and tests pay-to-deliver option

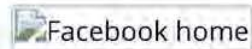
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What messages do you want see in your Facebook Messages inbox? The social network hopes to answer, or at least better understand, that question with two releases: brand-new message filtering options for your inbox and a way to pay to ensure your messages are delivered to someone's inbox.

Facebook announced (<http://newsroom.fb.com/News/558/Update-to-Messaging-and-a-Test>) Thursday that it was tweaking the Facebook Messages inbox experience to better ensure that relevant messages get to your inbox, as opposed to being dumped into the "Other" folder, which is Facebook's equivalent of the spam folder.

The new inbox filters, which are rolling out globally, are Facebook's way of correcting a broken system. The company currently routes messages to your inbox or other folder based on your settings, but it has found that it pushes too many "high signal" messages (read as: messages you

probably want) to your Other folder, where they likely go unseen. To fix the problem, Facebook has created two filters, basic and strict, that will allow certain types of messages to reach your inbox that otherwise would not.



(<http://venturebeat.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/inbox-filters.png?>)

If you opt for the basic filter, Facebook will deliver “mostly messages from friends and people you may know” to your inbox. This means that messages from friends and friends of friends will go straight to your inbox. The strict filter is, well, stricter. Select this if you “mostly” want to receive messages from friends.

Both options, however, use the “mostly” terminology to allow for instances when Facebook puts its algorithmic magic to work and determines that a high signal message should get through. What’s a high signal message? One that comes from a Facebook Messenger for Android user (<http://venturebeat.com/2012/12/04/facebook-messenger-android-update-sms/>) who is not your friend but has your number, or an event invitation from someone you don’t know when the invite is going out to some of your mutual friends. Messages from a friend who emails your @facebook.com address will also get delivered.

There's one additional high signal type of message that can get through to your inbox beginning today — but the signal in question is payment. Facebook is kicking off a small test in the U.S. that will let people you are not friends with pay a small fee to send messages directly to your inbox. The fee will vary, as it's just a test, but prices start at \$1 per message. The theory is that the fee will serve as a solid indicator that this message is important.

"The test is designed to address situations where neither social nor algorithmic signals are sufficient," Facebook said in a blog post. "For example, if you want to send a message to someone you heard speak at an event but are not friends with, or if you want to message someone about a job opportunity, you can use this feature to reach their inbox."

A Facebook spokesperson would not provide additional guidance on the pay-to-deliver test, other than to add that you'll only be able to receive one paid-for message in your inbox each week.

Facebook photo (<http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-90929051/stock-photo-palo-alto-ca-dec-facebook-s-massive-overhaul-to-user-profiles-dubbed-timeline-is-now.html>) via Shutterstock

VentureBeat's VB Insight team is studying email marketing tools. Chime in here, and we'll share the results (<http://insight.venturebeat.com/email-marketing>).

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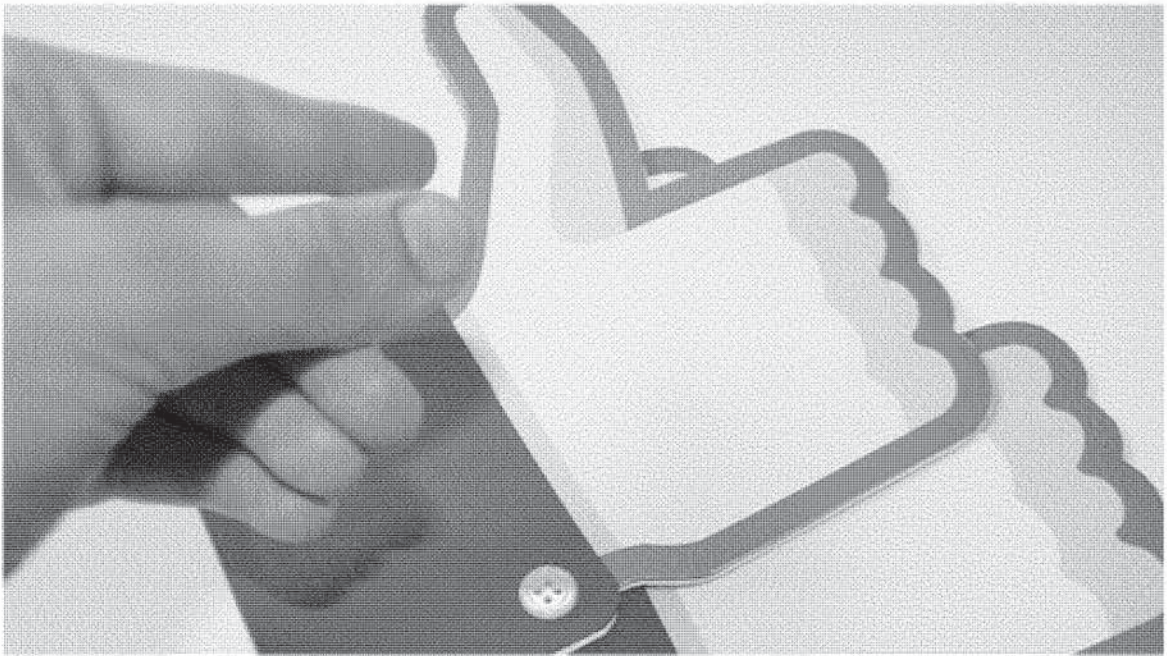
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Facebook: We're Not Liking Brand Pages For You

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BY SAMANTHA MURPHY KELLY

OCT 04, 2012

Facebook users may hand-pick brand pages to Like on the site, but a series of new reports suggest that the social network has been auto-Liking some additional pages based on links sent to friends.



However, Facebook told *Mashable* it is not auto-Liking pages for its users and isn't invading anyone's privacy.

It's been widely reported on Thursday that Facebook is scanning messages sent to others with attached links to better gauge their interests and add to a brand's Link count. Although clicking on a link will add to the Like number on a brand page, it's used only on the back-end for publishers to see the analytics of articles and shared URLs.

This is how the Share and Like count for web pages has always worked, according to Facebook.

SEE ALSO: [Want to Highlight Your New Facebook Pictures? Pay to Promote Them](#)

"Absolutely no private information has been exposed," a Facebook spokesperson told *Mashable*. "Each time a person shares a URL to Facebook, including through messages, the number of shares displayed on the social plugin for that website increases. Our systems parse the URL being shared in order to render the appropriate preview, and to also ensure that the message is not spam. These counts do not affect the privacy settings of content, and URLs shared through private messages are not attributed publicly with user profiles."

Email services such as Gmail have long taken this approach to target its users with ads or fight against viruses based on content written.

"We did recently find a bug with our social plugins where at times the count for the Share or Like goes up by two, and we are working on fix to solve the issue now," the spokesperson added. "To be clear, this only affects social plugins off of Facebook and is not related to Facebook Page likes. This bug does not impact the user experience with messages or what appears on their timelines."

[Facebook's developer page related to the Like button](#) states that the number of